

REMARKS

Claims 1-17, 22 and 23 stand rejected over one or more of Davis, Sauvage and Faithfull. Claims 1-23 have been canceled and new claims 24-29 have been added. The new claim 24 includes features of the original claims 1 and 8 and takes account of the examiner's comments on pages 2 and 3 of the action regarding the size of the stirrup bar. Claim 24 is drawn to a saddle arrangement which includes the saddle, stirrup, stirrup bar, buckle and stirrup leather and accordingly the geometry defined in the claim does not rely on features that are not specified in the claim.

An embodiment of claim 24 is a saddle arrangement in which the saddle has a stirrup bar over which a stirrup leather hangs in order to hang the stirrup from the stirrup bar and thus from the saddle. The stirrup leather carries a buckle to allow the length to be adjusted, thus setting the height of the stirrup. In an embodiment of claim 24, the side arms of the buckle are curved to form a recess to receive the stirrup bar (Fig. 7). This allows the buckle to sit closer to the saddle giving a smoother profile under the thigh of the rider. The tongue is sufficiently long to extend from a cross-bar located, in use, above the stirrup bar, to a pivot bar located, in use, below the stirrup bar, so that the pivot features of the pivot bar (particularly the eye 42A) can drop below the outer plane of the bar 14, again resulting in more comfort for the rider.

Davis discloses a stirrup leather arrangement intended to provide easy adjustment from a long condition and low stirrup, used for mounting a tall or restive horse, to a short condition, used while riding. This is described on page 2, lines 32 to 37. In order to meet the aims of Davis, the buckle must be easy to adjust, easy to reach and easy to manipulate for the rider seated on the horse, since with arrangements previously known to Davis, "great difficulty is experienced by the rider when mounted in re-adjusting the stirrup leather."

Davis does not mention or illustrate a stirrup bar. Any interaction between the stirrup leather described, and a stirrup bar can only be inferred; there is simply no disclosure of it. However, what can be inferred is significant, as follows.

First, it is evident from Fig. 3 of Davis that the purpose for a curvature of the buckle (Fig. 3) is to receive at least one extra thickness of the supplementary strap 1 (see the top of Fig. 1). In view of this extra thickness, and noting also that the free end of the main leather 5 is also located behind the buckle, at the top of Fig. 5, it is apparent that the recess formed by the curvature of the buckle 2 will be filled (or probably over-filled) by strap material. Above the location of the extra strap material, the pivot bar of the tongue blocks still more of the recess. The reality of the disclosure is that the recess cannot receive a stirrup bar, of whatever size, since the recess is already filled with extraneous material.

Turning again to the location of the pivot for the tongue, Fig. 1 of Davis shows this to be relatively high on the buckle and Fig. 2 illustrates a buckle which, apart from the additional features of the hook 3, is similar to the buckle illustrated in Fig. 2 of the present application. Looking at the scale of Fig. 1 (based on typical leather thicknesses), the required dimensions for a stirrup bar to be sufficiently strong to bear the high loads experienced during use will mean that the stirrup bar will be too big to fit in any remaining small gaps around the pivot and/or additional strap material. Alternatively, the buckle will be so large, in order to accommodate a stirrup bar of adequate strength, that the clasp 4 will move down, away from the rider, to be more difficult to access and manipulate.

Accordingly, the true teaching of Davis is to make the buckle arrangement more complex, bulky and therefore uncomfortable than a typical buckle arrangement as illustrated in Figs. 2 and 3 of the present application; to put additional material behind the buckle, so leading to a reduction of comfort; and to make the tongue pivot high on the buckle to allow the

extra hook 3 to be incorporated while still remaining accessible to the rider, thus pushing the buckle out and achieving the aims of Davis at the expense of reducing comfort. Comfort is reduced in the manner described in relation to Fig. 3 of the present application (page 4, line 32 to page 5, line 6 of the present application).

So, a technical problem arises from Davis, of how to make a buckle which is more comfortable for the rider.

The present invention provides a solution to this problem. In an embodiment of claim 24, the geometry of the stirrup bar, buckle, pivot bar and tongue are set out. There is no disclosure of a stirrup bar in Davis. Consequently, the geometry set out in claim 24 cannot be disclosed by Davis. Davis cannot deprive claim 24 of novelty.

Furthermore, Davis does not suggest that comfort is an issue in the design of buckles for saddle arrangements. Indeed, the suggestion is that Davis does not consider comfort to be a problem, since Davis only discloses ideas that make the comfort problem worse (specifically, by locating additional material behind the buckle, and by use of a high tongue pivot). Davis teaches structures which will not provide the structure defined in claim 24 and which will tend to make the buckle less comfortable for the rider, thus teaching away from the direction taught by the present inventor.

By contrast, the present inventor teaches that by building the buckle to be curved to provide a recess, and by leaving that recess open by not filling it with extraneous material, and by moving the tongue pivot below the pivot bar, the resulting combination of buckle and stirrup bar results in a shallower envelope under the thigh of the rider (page 6, line 22 of the present application), resulting in enhanced comfort for the rider.

Since Davis does not disclose any solution to the problem of buckle comfort, and indeed teaches a structure which increases

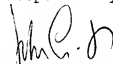
rider discomfort, the subject matter defined by new claim 24 is not obvious.

The examiner relies on Sauvage as disclosing the features of claims 6, 7, 11 and 12 regarding the pivot axis. The subject matter of claim 24 does not include the features of claims 6, 7, 11 and 12 and applicant therefore believes that Sauvage is not relevant to claim 24.

The examiner relies on Faithfull as showing a saddle arrangement in which a stirrup leather including a stirrup buckle may be included. Applicant submits that Faithfull adds nothing of significance to the disclosure of Davis beyond the fact that the buckle system of Davis may be used with a saddle arrangement. Applicant submits that this does not detract from patentability of claim 24.

In view of the foregoing, applicant submits that the subject matter of claim 24 is not disclosed or suggested by Davis, Sauvage or Faithfull, whether taken singly or in combination. Therefore, claim 24 is patentable and it follows that the dependent claims 25-29 also are patentable.

Respectfully submitted,



John Smith-Hill
Reg. No. 27,730

SMITH-HILL & BEDELL, P.C.
16100 N.W. Cornell Road, Suite 220
Beaverton, Oregon 97006

Tel. (503) 574-3100
Fax (503) 574-3197
Docket: SWIN 3356